

April 1844
Montpelier

THE
COMMON SCHOOL JOURNAL.

VOL. VI.

BOSTON, JANUARY 15, 1844.

No. 2.

THAT portion of our Introductory Article which was excluded from the last number for want of room, is here inserted.

RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION IN EUROPEAN SCHOOLS.

The different or opposite religious instruction given in the schools of Europe, and the different modes adopted to enforce religious creeds or opinions upon the young, would of themselves furnish material for a chapter, or even for a book. Of course, therefore, we can here merely glance at the subject.

In Holland, no instruction whatever, strictly and technically religious, is given in the public schools,—no creed, no form of religious faith, no dogma, nothing claiming to be an epitome of all Divine truth, is taught or enjoined. The Bible is not even allowed to be read. The only religious exercise which we witnessed in its schools was a prayer. At the morning opening of a very large school, a signal for silence was given by the teacher. A boy, twelve or thirteen years of age, was named; each scholar closed his eyes and leaned his head slightly forward, while the boy called upon, in a reverent and natural voice, made a brief prayer, and the business of the school proceeded. It was the most reverent and devotional company of children we ever saw on any occasion. Not an eye was opened, not a head or hand was moved, not a mind seemed to be abstracted, or a thought distracted from the devout service. The sentiment came forcibly to mind, how pleasant a thing it is to see those who “remember their Creator in the days of their youth.”

Religious instruction is allowed to be given to scholars, *as such*, out of the school, but this is not enjoined.

According to the late law of Belgium, the religion of the country (Catholic) is to be taught in all the schools. Dissenters, however, may withdraw their children during the hours of religious instruction.

In Prussia, only two forms of Christianity, (the Evangelical Protestant, and the Catholic,) are recognised or allowed in the schools; one of these must be taught; the parents may choose which, but there is no escape from one or the other. At the appointed age,—usually fourteen,—all Protestant children are confirmed, whether they will or not, and made to be members of the church. The confirmation depends upon the child's having

a certain amount of intellectual knowledge of the Bible, not at all upon his character or state of mind. If he does not know enough of the Bible to be made a member of the church, and to be admitted to the communion, he is sent to a Bible school, or remanded to his former school, to learn the Bible, after which he is received. It is easy to see, if this policy of the government prevails, that there can be no change in the religion of the country or of families, to the end of time. The descendants of Protestants are to be Protestants, and the descendants of Catholics to be Catholics; and should new light come with the millennium, the laws of the government will prohibit its reception. Whatever errors, if any, are in the present system, are to be retained in it forever; whatever truths, if any, are out of the present system, are to be forever excluded. Yet this is the land of Luther's nativity,—the birth-place of the Reformation. "I tell you again," said Martin Luther, "neither Pope nor bishop, nor any man, has a right to put a single syllable upon a Christian man, unless it be done with his own free consent; and what is otherwise done, is done in the spirit of tyranny"!!

It is but justice, however, to say, that in Prussia much excellent moral instruction, in addition to the doctrinal, is given in the schools. As a warning to other governments, however, the incontrovertible fact should be everywhere known, that the reaction of the public mind, from the creeds enforced upon it, towards Rationalism and Pantheism, has gone to a greater extreme in Prussia than in any other country.

In Scotland, there is no law of the land requiring religion to be taught in the schools, but a public opinion, stronger than any law, effectually secures it. In all the parochial schools, the Presbyterian-Calvinistic faith is most sedulously inculcated. Indeed, it would be very difficult, if not impossible, for any one, not a believer in joint Presbyterianism and Calvinism, to obtain a place as teacher in a parochial school. The school is the nursery of the church. Most of the teachers expect to become ministers, and they remain in the school only till they can get preferment in the church. In all the Scottish schools we saw, the doctrinal part of religion was taught vastly more than the preceptive.

But religion,—eternal, immutable religion,—is one thing on the north side of the Tweed, and another thing on the south. It is still another across the Irish channel, although the three kingdoms are parts of the same government. In the British realm, Immortal Truth is a masker and turncoat. In Scotland, she puts on one guise, in England another, in Ireland a third; and each is so opposite to the others, that her most ardent devotees, so far from recognising their goddess when they see her in one of her foreign garbs, deny her, hate her, spurn her, blaspheme and persecute her with might and main!

The only reason why there has not, long ago, been a system of public instruction in England, is, because the church steadfastly resists all legal provisions for literary and moral education unless it can control it for purposes of proselytism. A long array of facts might be adduced in support of this assertion.

We shall here, however, refer only to the last of the series,—a fact which caused a commotion throughout the kingdom that has hardly yet subsided, and will never be forgotten. It is well known that the Tory and Church party is now in power. On the 7th of March, 1843, a bill, called the Factories' Bill, purporting to make provision for the education of children employed in factories, was introduced to the House of Commons by Sir James Graham. It provided for the establishment of schools in connection with factories. For the superintendence of these schools, such a mode of appointing trustees was designated as would almost invariably secure a majority of members belonging to the established church. The clergyman of the parish was to be *ex officio* chairman of the trustees, to have a vote as a member, and, in case of a tie, to have a second vote. As if this were not enough to secure a teacher of the right religious profession, every appointment of a teacher was subject to the ratification of a bishop. The factory employer was empowered to reserve a certain sum out of the wages of each child, to pay for his tuition in the school, and he made himself liable to a severe penalty *if he employed any child who did not bring a certificate of having attended an authorized school. The parent was also liable for allowing his child to work, if he did not attend school.* In this way, attendance upon a school was made a condition precedent to the obtaining of employment. The option was, either to attend a school under the control and management of the church, or to starve for want of work.

The presentation of this bill kindled a flame throughout the whole country. All denominations of the dissenters,—supposed to amount to from one third to one half of the whole population of the kingdom,—rose against it. Meetings were everywhere held. Petitions and remonstrances poured in. The attack upon the measure was so universal, and so impetuous, that the ministers quailed before it. At first they modified the bill, in the hope of detaching a portion of its assailants, and quieting the fears of the rest. But this expedient proved ineffectual; and finding, at last, that they could not sustain it as a party measure, they abandoned the project, and thus the whole matter at present remains.*

In Ireland, a far different system now prevails. After the loss of a century and a half of time, after suffering the sorest

* From the fourth Report of the Registrar General, respecting Births and Marriages, it appears that,

In England and Wales, the proportion of persons who made their mark, at the time of marriage, instead of signing the marriage contract, was as follows:

33 men and 49 women in every 100.

In Yorkshire,	34	"	"	58	"	"	"
In Wales,	48	"	"	69	"	"	" &c.

In England and Wales, in the year 1839, there were committed to prison

for criminal offences, at the assizes, and by magistrates, in all	. . .	82,047
Of which number there were, who could read and write well,	4,920,
Of those who could neither read or write, or very imperfectly,	77,127

In England and Wales, in the year 1840, there were committed to prison more than one hundred thousand persons! What a procession to pass annually through the prisons, to catch and distribute the infection of guilt! Can even mere literary and moral education be worthless in such a country?

evils which religious bigotry could inflict, a system of perfect equity and impartiality, between the two great religious denominations of that country, has at last been established.

"For nearly the whole of the last century," says the sixth Report of the Commissioners, "the government of Ireland labored to promote Protestant education, and tolerated no other. Large grants of public money were voted for having children educated in the Protestant faith, *while it was made a transportable offence in a Roman Catholic, (and if the party returned, high treason,) to act as a schoolmaster, or assistant to a schoolmaster, or even as a tutor in a private family.*"

In order to remedy some of the calamities resulting from such a course of administration, the Commissioners of Education, in 1824-5, recommended the appointment of two teachers in every school, one Protestant and the other Roman Catholic, to superintend, separately, the religious education of the children. It was soon found that this scheme was impracticable.

All these plans failing, the government was driven to the only earthly remedy for the enormous evils resulting from the general ignorance of the country. That remedy was JUSTICE.

By virtue of a letter of the Right Honorable E. G. Stanley, (now Lord Stanley,) then chief Secretary for Ireland, dated October, 1831, a Board was established "to superintend a system of education from which should be banished even the suspicion of proselytism, and which, admitting children of all religious persuasions, should not interfere with the peculiar tenets of any." This letter is the charter and constitution of the present Irish National Board of Education.

The Board is composed of some of the most distinguished men of both the Protestant and Catholic sects. Archbishop Whately, of Dublin, may be considered as at the head of the Protestants, and the Catholic Archbishop, Mr. Murray, at the head of the Catholics. From the organization of this Board, in 1831, to the present time, notwithstanding the number and difficulty of the questions they have had to decide, there has been no protest or dissent on the part of any of its members. To show how sedulously they abstain from all interference either with politics or party theology, we quote one or two paragraphs from their printed regulations.

"The Commissioners require that no use shall be made of the schoolrooms for any purpose tending to contention, such as the holding of political meetings in them, or bringing into them political petitions, or documents of any kind, for signature; and that they shall not be converted into places of public worship. The Commissioners require the schoolrooms to be used exclusively for the purposes of education.

"The Commissioners regard the attendance of any of their teachers at meetings held for political purposes, or their taking part in elections for members of Parliament, except by voting, as incompatible with the performance of their duties, and as a violation of rule which will render them liable to dismissal."

No religious instruction can be given in the schools. This prohibition includes the reading of the Scriptures, in either the

Protestant or Catholic version, the teaching of catechisms, and prayer. But all the children receive religious instruction from the clergy of the respective denominations to which they belong, at times and places set apart for that purpose,—the grand principle being,—combined literary and moral, with separate religious instruction.

The Board also requires the following beautiful lesson, specially prepared for the purpose, by that great and good man, Archbishop Whately, to be hung up conspicuously in every schoolroom:

“Christians should endeavor, as the Apostle Paul commands them, to ‘live peaceably with all men;’ (Rom. ch. xii., v. 18,) even with those of a different religious persuasion.

“Our Saviour, Christ, commanded his disciples to ‘love one another.’ He taught them to love even their enemies, to bless those that cursed them, and to pray for those that persecuted them. He himself prayed for his murderers.

“Many men hold erroneous doctrines; but we ought not to hate or persecute them. We ought to seek for the truth, and to hold fast what we are convinced is the truth; but not to treat harshly those who are in error. Jesus Christ did not intend his religion to be forced on men by violent means. He would not allow his disciples to fight for him.

“If any persons treat us unkindly, we must not do the same to them; for Christ and his apostles have taught us not to return evil for evil. If we would obey Christ, we must do to others, not as they do to us, but as we should wish them to do to us.

“Quarrelling with our neighbors and abusing them, is not the way to convince them that we are in the right, and they in the wrong. It is more likely to convince them that we have not a Christian spirit.

“We ought to show ourselves followers of Christ, who, ‘when he was reviled, reviled not again,’ (1 Pet. ch. ii., v. 23,) by behaving gently and kindly to every one.”

Under the auspices of this Board, as it appears by their last Report, dated March 21st, 1843, they already had the superintendence of two thousand seven hundred and twenty-one schools, with an attendance of three hundred and nineteen thousand seven hundred and ninety-two children. Thus has been accomplished, in twelve years, what centuries of persecution could never have effected. Indeed, how vain have been all the attempts of bigotry to inculcate or produce true religion among men! How vain disfranchisement and persecution, the prison and torture, the fagot and the axe, to make one intelligent convert to the great truths of Christianity, or to raise up one good man as a blessing to the world!

What we want,—what every lover of the truth wants,—is, a generation of children of clearer and stronger intellects; of purer sentiments; of propensities less wayward and perverse; of passions and appetites more under the control of reason and conscience; and then, upon the minds of such children, let those religious views be engrafted which shall be best commended by Divine authority. Counting as nothing all the oppressions and inhumanities which mankind have suffered

since the first feeling of religious pride and hatred rankled in the bosom of Cain; counting as nothing all the persecutions in which powerful sects have been destroyed, all the religious wars in which whole countries have been devastated by fire and sword; setting aside the rack, the dungeon, the civil disabilities and civil disfranchisements, which bigots have instigated or ordained;—counting all these as nothing, and what has been gained, by intolerance, towards the extinction of old views, or the permanent ascendancy of new ones? All principle, all truth, remains the same as before. Not an argument or an inference has been annihilated. The moment force and fear are removed, the elastic mind springs back to its former condition, and reinvestigates the question, “What is truth?” on the eternal grounds of Divine authority and reason.

In conclusion, we appeal to all those who really and truly prize the glorious boon of civil and religious liberty. You deny that the few are fit to govern the many; see, then, that the many are made fit to govern themselves. You have seen that the attempt to produce a unity of religious faith by force, or fraud, or fear, is vain; seek, then, a unity of faith founded in reason and the Divine commands; and for these highest among earthly or heavenly objects, give to the children of the rising generation a generous, a pure, an exalted education.

NOTE. We propose, in the present volume, so far to alter our course in regard to text-books for schools, as to publish the titles of such as we may receive. We do not pledge ourselves, however, to give any opinion of works prepared for schools, unless it may be in cases of extraordinary merit or demerit.

HABIT.

HABIT is the deepest law of human nature. It is our supreme strength, if also, in certain circumstances, our miserablest weakness. From Stoke to Stowe is as yet a field, all pathless, untrodden. From Stoke where I live, to Stowe where I have to make my merchandises, perform my businesses, consult my heavenly oracles, there is as yet no path or human footprint; and I, impelled by such necessities, must nevertheless undertake the journey. Let me go once, scanning my way with any earnestness of outlook, and successfully arriving, my footprints are an invitation to me a second time, to go by the same way. It is easier than any other way; the industry of “scanning” lies already invested in it for me; I can go this time with less of scanning, or without scanning at all. Nay, the very sight of my footprints, what a comfort for me; and, in a degree, for all my brethren of mankind! The footprints are trodden and retrodden; the path wears ever broader, smoother, into a broad highway, where even wheels can run; and many travel it. Habit is our primal, fundamental law. Habit and Imitation,—there is nothing more perennial in us than these two. They are the source of all Working and all Apprenticeship, of all Practice and all Learning, in this world.

Yes, the wise man too, speaks and acts in Formulas; all

men do so. In general, the more completely cased with Formulas a man may be, the safer, happier is it for him. Thou who, in an All of rotten Formulas, seemest to stand nigh bare, having indignantly shaken off the superannuated rags and unsound callosities of Formulas,—consider how thou, too, art still clothed. This English nationality, whatsoever from uncounted ages is genuine and a fact among thy native people, and their words and ways; all this, has it not made for thee a skin, or second skin, adhesive actually, as thy natural skin? This thou hast not stripped off; this thou wilt never strip off; the humor that thy mother gave thee has to show itself through this. A common, or it may be an uncommon Englishman thou art; but, good heavens! what sort of Arab, Chinaman, Jew-clothesman, Turk, Hindoo, African Mandingo, wouldst thou have been, *thou*, with those mother qualities of thine?

It strikes me dumb to look over the long series of faces, such as any full church, court-house, London tavern, meeting, or miscellany of men, will show them. Some score or two of years ago, all these were little red-colored, pulpy infants; each of them capable of being kneaded, baked, into any social form you chose; yet see now how they are fixed and hardened, into artisans, artists, clergy, gentry, learned sergeants, unlearned dandies, and can and shall now be nothing else henceforth.

Mark on that nose the color left by too copious port and viands; to which the profuse cravat, with exorbitant breastpin, and the fixed, forward, and, as it were, menacing glance of the eyes, correspond. That is a "man of business," prosperous manufacturer, house contractor, engineer, law-manager; his eye, nose, cravat, have, in such work and fortune, got such a character. Deny him not thy praise, thy pity. Pity *him* too, the hard-handed, with bony brow, rudely combed hair, eyes looking out as in labor, in difficulty and uncertainty; rude mouth, the lips coarse, loose, as in hard toil and life-long fatigue they have got the habit of hanging. Hast thou seen aught more touching than the rude intelligence, so cramped, yet energetic, unsubduable, true, which looks out of that marred visage? Alas! and his poor wife with her own hands washed that cotton neck-cloth for him, buttoned that coarse shirt, sent him forth creditably trimmed as she could. In such imprisonment lives he, for his part. Man cannot now deliver him; the red, pulpy infant has been baked and fashioned *so*.

Or what kind of baking was it that this other brother mortal got, which has baked him into the genus Dandy? Elegant vacuum; serenely looking down upon all plenums and entities as low and poor to his serene chimeraship and nonentity laboriously obtained! Heroic vacuum; inexpugnable, while purse and present condition of society hold out; curable by no hellebore. The doom of fate was,—Be thou a dandy! Have thy eye-glasses, opera-glasses, thy Longacre cabs with white-breeched tiger, thy yawning impassivities, pococurantisms; *fix* thyself in dandyhood, undeliverable; it is thy doom.

And all these, we say, were red-colored infants; of the same pulp and stuff a few years ago; now irretrievably shaped and kneaded as we see!

T. CARLYLE.

[From the Newburyport Herald.]

LETTERS TO A PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHER.

No. IV.

My ———. In this letter I am to speak, or begin to speak, of some of the particular branches you are to teach, and how you may best, in my view, teach them. Let me guard you, however, against blindly following my advice and acting upon my suggestions. Unless by your own conviction of their worth, produced by thought, and confirmed, if opportunity favor, by experience, you make the ideas of others your own, by adoption and not by mere reception, they will be of little value to you. Mechanical imitation of plans which your neighbors follow or deem good, is about the worst policy a teacher can pursue. Advantageous hints you may get from many quarters; but that they may be of real service, you must re-produce them in your own mind, so that they shall have something of the freshness and force of original conceptions, and be understood in their spirit and philosophy, as well as in their letter. This remark will apply to other matters besides school-keeping. Machine teachers or machine men and women in any vocation, the wires of whose life are pulled by the hands of others, have hardly more than the fact of motion to save them from being numbered with the dead, and bear about as close a resemblance to genuine and living *humanities*, as your image in a mirror does to that very respectable looking body, your own self;—they may be very accurate reflections, but they cannot go alone. And a teacher who cannot go alone, will be an admirable illustration of what is said about the blind leading the blind. All I ask of you for my notions, then, is, a fair consideration and the test of experiment, if you deem that worth making.

I take it for granted that your school is *classified*. There is a row of little fellows,—not yet deprived, perhaps, of the freedom of *robes* and trowsers, by being encased in *jackets* and trowsers,—shrugging their shoulders, looking out of the corners of their eyes, and twisting into cork-screws the corners of their tires,—gracefully awkward and beautifully sheepish, with shyness and roguery alternating in most pleasing variety. These are your *abecedarians*, (what a big word and sonorous that, to apply to such Lilliputians!) whose tiny feet you are to put on the first round of the ladder of learning,—that is to say, whom you are to introduce to the mysteries of the alphabet, as preliminary to the greater mysteries of syllables and words, that in their turn are to open the way to mightier mysteries, all of which a life-time shall not solve. Well now, consider what, chiefly, you desire to do. You desire to help the children to form an acquaintance with A, and B, and C, and the rest of the very interesting family of letters, so that they shall know their form and bearing intimately, and be able to recognise them as clever fellows they have seen before, and to call them, with all the fa-

miliarity of old friends, by their *given* names. That is your first object:—to teach the shape of these twenty-six thaumaturgical signs,—for wonder-working symbols they certainly are, giving immortality on earth to the high thoughts of Milton and the genius of Shakspeare, and bringing home to the hearts of men, even the promises and counsels of the Source of All Truth,—the Fountain of All Inspiration. There is dignity, then, let me just say in passing, and glory to him who hath an eye to see and a mind to comprehend it, in the picture of a kind instructor teaching a little boy his letters; it is opening the portal,—can you tell to how large, how grand and how crowded a temple, wherein dwell melody, and beauty and wisdom,—problems for reason to solve,—sublime creations for imagination to admire, and sweet assurances for the affections to covet? Newton learned the alphabet once, when he was a little boy; and there was a time when Bacon could not say A, and when, too, the march of his mind from A to B, was possibly as large a stride as he ever made, by one effort, towards the true philosophy.

But to return to your school and that row of incarnated “perpetual motions.” You wish to teach them to know at sight the members of the alphabet, and to call them by name. The way to deal with one of the tribe will show forth the way to deal with all of them. It seems to me,—I do not know what I might do, if tempted to keep a primary school,—but it seems to me, I should *not* go on, day after day, calling up a child, and, with card or book, and pointer in hand, hear him say A-er, B-er, C-er, and so on to Z-er. I would rather let him,—or better, his whole class at once,—take a look at a good large, full-grown capital A, on the black-board, till they took in his whole image, from his pointed top to his snow-shoe-like feet, including, of course, the cross-bar, which keeps his two sides from falling together and falling asunder. Then I would tell them the name of the gentleman, whose privilege it is to stand at the beginning of all dictionaries and be captain over his brethren,—being careful to say that this *name* is not always the *sound* which he represents. Next, I would permit each boy to try his hand at making an A. After this, I would take the same course with small a, to show what sort of a body A becomes when he is not a captain, but a common soldier. Thus, or somewhat thus, not dealing with more than one letter at a time, I would go through the alphabet, remembering that I was giving an exercise for the education of the *eye*. After having introduced the scholars to all the letters, both great and small, in their order, I would accustom them to draw or pick out any I might call for,—to let them know the letters are locomotive and do not always stand arranged as they first saw them, in the “Little Primer.” How this system, as Mr. Weller says, “would work in action,” you can discover by trying. My impression is, the boys would *learn* the alphabet, before they *knew* it.

With highest respect for your humblest labors, I am again,
Truly yours, UTOPIA.

[For the Common School Journal.]

An Address upon Education and Common Schools; delivered at Cooperstown, Otsego County, Sept. 21, and repeated, by request, at Johnstown, Fulton County, Oct. 17, 1843. By JAMES HENRY, JR., Superintendent of Common Schools for the County of Herkimer, N. Y.

THE Address, whose title has been given above, is so much superior to ordinary addresses, that I think the attention of the people should be directed to it, by some notice, in every periodical that aims to direct the public mind. I could, without difficulty, make a long article of this notice; for there is hardly a paragraph in the Address that would not furnish a useful quotation, or a subject for thought and sober remark; but no such notice will be attempted, it being far better that those interested in the subject of the Address, should procure it, and read it, and think over it as a *whole*,—as a connected view of what education, school-books, teachers, should be; as an outline of the plan on which a mighty State is now conducting one of the most important works ever undertaken by any government, *the instruction of every soul subject to its legislation*.

It seems from the Address, that the public school system of New York has been in operation about a quarter of a century; and, after various changes suggested by experience, has settled upon an organization that promises to be more efficient than any yet attempted. The Secretary of State is the State Superintendent, subordinate to whom there is a superintendent for each of the numerous counties in that great State, and in each town there is one superintendent, who performs the whole duty of our town school committee. I am not informed whether the county or town superintendents are paid for their services, but I presume they are, or the duty will as usual be but imperfectly done.* The number of officers has been reduced to about one fifth of those required on the former plan, and the author of the Address says, "So great a reduction in the number of officers, while it will impose increased duties upon individuals, must simplify and render intelligent, to an extraordinary degree, the action of the department. Under its present organization, granting only that proper persons be selected to fill its offices, and that they faithfully perform their duties, the Department must necessarily be more intelligent, more efficient, more salutary, and, therefore, more popular, than it has ever before been." I believe in the importance of having such duties performed by as few minds as possible, and I could wish that some features of the New York system were engrafted upon ours. The only advantage that I can perceive in ours lies in the fact, that our State Superintendent, (for the Secretary of the Board of Education is nothing less,) is exclusively devoted to his office, whilst that of New York, in addition to the oversight of the eleven thousand schools, is burdened with the care of every other department of the government of that extensive and wonderfully active State. The Address does not inform us, moreover,

* They are paid. [Ed.]

whether the county and town superintendents are dependent upon every change in the current of politics, as with us is too much the case; but, we trust, some provision exists by which these officers are retained long enough to learn their duty, and to be of some service after it is learned. If there is any department into which politics and sectarianism must never intrude, and from which they must even be excluded by every possible restriction, it is the department of public instruction. I have long entertained the hope that, in our towns, something like the New York plan would be adopted, especially in our cities and largest towns; for, one competent, disinterested, active superintendent, knowing as he should the condition and wants of each, and having a clear view of the whole, would do more for the improvement of the schools, than any committee, and the benefit would be about in the inverse ratio of the number of such a committee. County Superintendents will be less necessary in our compact and comparatively small State, especially as the State Superintendent is free compared with that of New York.

After glancing at the organization of the School System, the Address has some judicious remarks upon text books, which the author thinks must begin with the elements and be properly graduated; they should be national, also, and calculated to improve the morals of the young. The author has even gone so far as to give his opinion of various books in the different branches of learning, and, while we admire his independence, and generally approve of his judgment, we cannot but regret that he has not mentioned our Colburn, and probably has never seen many valuable books, lately published in New England, that have not yet had time to travel out of it. As to the utility of having one uniform series of books in all the schools, if it were practicable, I have my doubts; for it appears to me that all attempts to prescribe books, and branches, and rules in literary institutions, if carried out, soon limit the progress of improvement, and compel the schools thus fettered to fall in the rear of those which are at liberty to avail themselves of every improvement that offers. Besides, I have seen that whenever a course is prescribed to a teacher, he rarely feels bound to look beyond it, and loses that enterprise which is kept alive by the feeling that the world is going forward, and he must keep up with it, or be dropped.

Speaking of Penmanship, the author says, "Seldom, indeed, do we find any teacher, male or female, who possesses competent skill to instruct in this most useful art. I am of opinion that Root's System of Philosophical Penmanship is one of the best works of its kind. Writing is almost purely a mechanical art, and may, without doubt, be generally taught with far greater success than heretofore." I have selected these remarks to caution the author not to rely so much upon any system, as upon *the actual skill of the teacher*; for it seems to me that, with the best tools in the world, an apprentice will generally be a bungler if his master is not a good workman. We hope the author, in his county, will insist upon every teacher's being a penman, especially if "writing is almost purely a mechanical art." I do

not deny the fact that a few children have become good writers under teachers who were bad penmen; but I should be very unwilling to allow that the teacher had any hand in it. I do not mean to discourage the use of Systems of Penmanship, but merely to say, that, in the hands of unskilful teachers, they only have the limited merit of being better than nothing.

New York has lately made a change in its arrangement for the supply of well-educated teachers. The attempt to provide for an adequate supply, by legislative aid afforded to sixteen academies, located in different parts of the State, seems to have failed, probably because the teaching of teachers was made only an incidental part of the instruction. The plan now is, to select four academies, and so to aid them, that the "education of Common School teachers will become their principal business." This is a nearer approach to our Normal Schools, and should encourage us to hold on to them, and by no means trust to the hope, which some entertain, of improving the race of teachers by leaving them to chance; or, what is nearly equivalent, to those institutions which are established for a very important, but a very different purpose.

Among the means of general instruction, the author makes well-deserved mention of the District School Journal, published at Albany, and directly encouraged and patronized by the State. "This paper," says the Address, "is the regular organ of the department, and in it are published all the laws relating to the Common Schools, with their expositions and the decisions of the State Superintendent." All this is equally true of the Common School Journal of Massachusetts, which is highly commended in the Address;* and I only regret that the rest of the paragraph, of which only a part is given above, is still inapplicable to Massachusetts, where there are a hundred towns that probably never see this Journal, and where not one school district in ten takes it. The extract is as follows: "*One copy of the N. Y. Journal for each school district is paid for by the State and forwarded by mail. Superintendents are by law required to pay the postage on these papers, take them from the office, preserve them, and, at the end of each year, to have them neatly and substantially bound, and placed in the district library.*" Will not our State go and do likewise?

The Address speaks very encouragingly of the effect of their district libraries. Its words are, "The crowning glory of our whole Common School system is the institution of district libraries. These institutions are designed to carry onward and complete the process which is but commenced in the schools. The schools are intended to teach children and youth the art of acquiring useful knowledge; the library is designed to afford them the means of reducing that art to practice." New York has made a far more liberal grant for the purchase of libraries than our own State has made; but we have done well, and it is to be hoped that no consideration will induce any district not

* I see your publishers have given the encomium alluded to, in their address at the beginning of the last number.

yet supplied with a library, to forego the privilege and the advantage of having one; for I consider every such library to contain millions of valuable seeds, that will take root in youthful minds, and bear fruit that cannot be measured or valued.

The Address contains an earnest appeal to the Convention of Superintendents, a glance at the favorable signs of the times, a deserved compliment to woman, who has come up with such power to the work of education, and has many other remarks on which I should like to linger; but my motive in noticing the Address, was, as I have said, to call the attention of teachers and of the friends of education to it, that it may do good here, as it must have done in the great State whose institutions have called it forth.

Q.

[The following, from the London "Punch," is a capital hit at that foolish system of education which postpones useful knowledge to fashionable accomplishments.—Ed.]

Miss Mary Anne Watkins examined.—Is the daughter of a private gentleman. Has several brothers and sisters. Is engaged to be married to a young surgeon, as soon as he can get into practice. Has an idea that she ought to know something of housekeeping; supposes it comes naturally. Can sing and play, draw and embroider. Cannot say that she ever darned a stocking. The price of brown Windsor soap is from one shilling to one and threepence the packet; cannot tell what yellow comes to; never got any. Circassian cream is half-a-crown a pot; does not know the price of pearlash. Knows how to furnish a house, would go to the upholsterer's and buy furniture. Cannot say how much she would expect to give for an easy-chair or for a wash-hand-stand, or a set of tea things; should ask mamma if necessary; never thought of doing it before. Papa paid for the dress she had on; forgets what he gave for it. Has no notion what his butcher's bill amounts to in a year.

Miss Harriet Somers.—Papa is a clergyman. Is unable to say whether he is a pluralist or not. He is a curate, and has but one curacy. Expects to be married, of course. Would not refuse a young man with three hundred a year. Has no property of her own. Has some skill in needle-work; lately worked a brigand in red, blue and yellow worsted. Can make several washes for the complexion. Cannot tell how she would set about making an apple dumpling. Loaves should remain in the oven till they are done; the time they would take depends upon circumstances. If she were married, would expect her husband to be ill sometimes; supposing him to be ordered calves' foot jelly, should send for it to the pastry cook's. It never occurred to her that she might make it herself. If she tried, should buy some calves' feet; what next she should do, cannot say. Has received a fashionable education; knows French and Italian. Likes dancing better than anything else.

Miss Jane Briggs.—Is the daughter of a respectable tradesman,—a grocer and tea dealer. Looks forward to a union with somebody in her own station in life. Was for five years at a boarding school in Clapham. Really cannot say what a leger

is; it may be the same as a day-book. Has an album. Has painted flowers in the album; it tells you how to dress things. Should suppose that a receipt in full was a receipt that told you all particulars. Never heard of a balance-sheet; it may be a calico sheet for aught she knows. Cannot say whether papa buys or sells at prime cost. Has eaten fowl occasionally. Never trussed one. Does not know how to make stuffing for a duck or a goose.

Miss Elizabeth Atkins.—Resides at Hampstead with her parents. Papa is a solicitor; has office in Grey's Inn. Will have a little money of her own shortly, when she comes of age. Is not aware whether she is a minor or not. The property was left her by an aunt. Cannot say whether she is a legatee or testatrix. Her property is real property. Is sure of that. It is in the funds. Should say that it was not personal property, as it was not anything about her person. Knows what consols are; has read about them in history; they were ancient Romans. Mamma keeps house. When she marries, expects to do the same. Is unable to say what the family milk-score is a week. Starch is used to stiffen collars; has no notion what it is a pound, or what made of, or whether it is used with hot water or cold. Drugget is cheaper than Turkey carpet; but how much, cannot say. Her time is principally occupied in fancy-work, reading novels, and playing quadrilles and waltzes on the piano.

Out of sixty other young ladies examined, three only knew how to corn beef, six what a sausage was composed of, and four how to make onion sauce. Not one of the whole number could brew. They mostly could tell what the last new song was; but none of them knew the current price of beef. Every soul of them meant to marry as soon as possible. What is to become of their husbands? Echo answers "What!" and Punch shudders at the idea.

The REVISED STATUTES of the COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS, and Additional Laws to 1844, reduced to Questions and Answers, for the use of Schools and Families, by WILLIAM B. WEDGWOOD, A. M., member of the New York bar; author of the Revised Statutes of New York, New Hampshire, Maine, Connecticut, et al. reduced to a similar form. pp. 116. Boston. TAPPAN & DENNET. 1844.

To abridge the Statute Law of a State, for popular use, may be a good work, provided that no part of the substance of the original be thrown away in the process. But mere excision is not abridgment. Amputation may make a thing shorter, but it is not abridgment, in a literary sense. An abridgment in literature should be like a miniature in painting, reduced in size, but still retaining every feature and lineament of the original. Especially should an abridgment of laws be accurate. It should omit no important provision, for then the reader might be led astray,—supposing that he understood the whole rule of action, when he might understand only a part of it.

We fear Mr. Wedgwood's book will not bear the application of these tests. Nor are we surprised at this; for if it is a difficult thing for a man to understand the statute laws of his own State, how much more difficult to understand those of another. Besides, to express many ideas in few words is more difficult than any of the "seven labors;" and one who is not willing to devote much time to examination, and much labor to compression, should not undertake such a task.

On taking up this work, we naturally turned to the 23d Chapter, "On Public Instruction;" and here we have the following question:—

"What shall be kept in every town containing fifty families or householders, in each year, at the expense of the town?"

The answer is correctly given, but the reader is left with the impression, that the fact of a town's containing fifty families is a condition precedent to the obligation of maintaining such a school as is described. Such *was* the law as it was enacted in the "Revised Statutes;" but on the eighteenth of March, 1839, an additional act was passed, imposing this obligation upon all towns, without reference to the number of their inhabitants. This fact, however, although the book professes to be an abridgment of the "Additional Laws to 1844," is nowhere mentioned.

Again, to the question,

"What is the authority of the committee as to school books?"

the answer is,

"They may decide what books shall be used."

Now, the 17th section of the law, (23d Chap. R. S.,) enacts positively that the school committee *shall* direct what books shall be used in the several schools kept by the town.

On the same page, the following question occurs:—

"To whom shall the school committees of the several towns and of the city of Boston make returns, on or before the first day of November in each year?"

There are two errors involved in this question, one of which is very material.

A reader would suppose, by the question, that there is but one, instead of three cities, in the State.

But a very important error consists in the time specified in the question, and which would mislead any school committee-man who should follow it. The time required by law, on or before which the return shall be annually made, is the "last day of April," and not the "first day of November," as indicated by the question. If it be said that the school committee will not be misled, because they must be supposed to know so important a fact connected with their duties, we reply, if they must be supposed to know such a fact, then they do not need to buy Mr. Wedgwood's book.

The "Form of Returns" given, is exceedingly incorrect, and almost the whole law respecting it is erroneously stated.

The answer to one of the last questions in the chapter, viz.,

“Upon what conditions can towns receive their distributive share of the school fund?”

is perhaps more seriously and fundamentally wrong than any other. The towns do not receive, as is here implied, any distributive share of the school fund, but only of its income; and one of the most important conditions on which they are entitled to a share of this income, is wholly omitted, viz., that of returning a copy of their annual report to the town. The obligation of the committees to make such a report,—one of the most important provisions in our whole school law,—is nowhere referred to in this abridgment. Nor is a word said of the existence of the Board of Education until the very last sentence in the book, where it is said to have been established by a law of 1843. It was established in 1837.

If the accuracy displayed in this chapter is any specimen of the residue of the “Abridgment,” we think the author’s profits ought to be wholly abridged, by an entire prevention of the sale of his book.

SCHOOL BOOKS.

EDWARD’S FIRST LESSONS IN GEOMETRY. By the author of “Theory of Teaching,” and “Edward’s First Lessons in Grammar.” Boston. William D. Ticknor & Co. 1844.

LESSONS ON THE BOOK OF PROVERBS, topically arranged, forming a system of Practical Ethics, for the use of Sabbath Schools and Bible Classes. “With all thy gettings, get wisdom.” Boston. Tappan & Dennet, 114 Washington St. For sale at the Sabbath School Depositories. 1843.

THE PRIMARY ARITHMETIC; commencing with the simplest combination of numbers, and including all that is requisite to a thorough business knowledge of the subject. Mainly designed, however, as preparatory to larger arithmetics. By John H. Willard, late Principal of the Episcopal Academy, Pawtucket, R. I., and formerly Associate Principal of the Union High School, Providence, R. I. Providence. Burnett & Blodget. 1844.

THE COMPANION TO SPELLING BOOKS, in which the orthography and meaning of many thousand words, most liable to be misspelled and misused, are impressed upon the memory by a regular series of written exercises. By William B. Fowle, author of the Common School Speller, Common School Grammar, Common School Geography, Bible Reader, Primary Reader, Familiar Dialogues, Linear Drawing, and other school books in French and English. Educational Book Establishment, Boston. Published by Wm. B. Fowle & N. Capen, 184 Washington St. 1843.

ERRATUM.—No. 1, p. 6, 9th line from top, for “purity,” read “piety.”

[THE COMMON SCHOOL JOURNAL; published semi-monthly, by WILLIAM B. FOWLE AND N. CAPEN, No. 184 Washington Street, (corner of Franklin Street,) Boston. HORACE MANN, Editor. Price, One Dollar a year.]